DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 297 791 JC 880 294

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TITLE Infusing International Experience into the Curriculum.
INSTITUTION Princeton Univ., NJ. Mid-Career Fellowship Program.
PUB DATE [88]
NOTE 19p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Community Colleges; General Education; *Global Approach; *Intercultural Programs; *Interdisciplinary Approach; International Educational Exchange; *International Studies; Study Abroad; Undergraduate Study
IDENTIFIERS *Raritan Valley Community College NJ

ABSTRACT

In an effort to increase students' global awareness, New Jersey's Raritan Valley Community College (RVCC) has developed a number of courses and programs designed to infuse an international and intercultural perspective into the curriculum. Among the on-going projects of the college are: (1) the integration of a basic composition and an Introduction to Sociology course, using an international perspective to provide common content; (2) an international lecture series offered by on- and off-campus experts in the arts, humanities, and social sciences; (3) faculty exchange; (4) study abroad in the summer and semestral breaks; (5) non-credit mini-courses in international business and foreign languages; (6) holocaust studies with a global perspective; and (7) a six-unit course integrating Western Civilization and writing instruction. The RVCC experience in international education has evolved out of the perceived needs of the college community and the interests and expertise of faculty and administrators. Through involvement in the New Jersey Collegiate Consortium for International/Intercultural Education and the efforts of a full-time program coordinator, international education seems destined for expansion at the college. (MDB)

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INFUSING INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE INTO THE CURRICULUM

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JC 880 294

Liberal education is being relegated to the background in American undergraduate colleges as the trend toward careerism intensifies. This is especially true in the community colleges where the curriculum has been most sensitive to marketplace demands. According to a recently-released three-year study of the American undergraduate colleges by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, our undergraduate college today is a "troubled institution." Its report states: "Driven by careerism and overshadowed by graduate and professional education, many of the nation's colleges and universities are more successful in credentialling than in providing quality education for their students."

One aspect of liberal education that has been taken for granted is international education. There has been a growing concern among community college educators that too many of our students who graduate with associate degrees are only vaguely aware of major international issues and sadly ignorant about cultures outside the United States. We need to look beyond our country because we live in a world that has shrunk considerably, a world that is increasingly interrelated. The stock market crash of October 1987 and the oil crisis of the 1970's showed us the far-reaching and

serious repercussions of events about which we could not afford to be ignorant.

As an educational institution, we must share the responsibility of exposing our students to global awareness. Community colleges are no longer local. In the words of Professor Howard Berry (1986) "The world impinges. The community can no longer be narrowly defined as our local, county, region, or even Western Civilization. It is literally, economicaly, politically, and culturally the world."(p. 1)

Mindful of this curriculum bias, Raritan Valley Community College has actively supported and promoted a number of projects aimed at making its students more aware of the world by infusing international and intercultural education into its curriculum. Various on-going projects and programs are described below. They are not meant to be exhaustive. They have been selected for their practicability and adaptability to other community colleges.

International Experience as the Common Content of Basic Composition and Introduction to Sociology

This project is funded by the New Jersey Department of Higher Education Division of International Education. The following description is excerpted from the project proposal authored by Professor Barbara Seater (1986).

This project integrates the Basic Composition course with Introduction to Sociology course. The three-credit,

three-hour Introduction to Sociology course is one of the more popular introductory courses offered at Raritan Valley Community College and satisfies the social science degree requirement for all programs. Students who score below standard in their writing portion of the New Jersey Basic Skills Test are required to register for non-credit four-hour Basic Composition. These two tandem courses are ideally suited to introducing "international education across the curriculum." This new version adds a contact hour to the Introduction to Sociology class to allow students more opportunity to fully explore the international comparisons of the topics covered in class. The combination coursework facilitates the development of both literacy skills and global knowledge simultaneously.

This project significantly changes the traditional mode of instruction by providing students, who are in need of developmental writing, with the course that would be relevant to other college work. Critics of traditional remedial or developmental writing programs have argued that students in these courses perceive the courses negatively because they are regarded as substandard courses. But it may also be that the content of the course is not relevant to the material that the student is learning in other classes.

Many students enrolled in Basic Composition are also concurrently enrolled in other college courses, primarily in

order to be eligible for financial aid (a minimum of twelve hours is necessary to qualify for financial assistance). This is often self-defeating for the student as he is often ill-prepared to undertake additional college coursework. One suggestion has been to limit the selection of courses to those that do not require the abilities measured by the Basic Skills Test. The courses, however, include many that are not required for degree programs. Also, enrollment in these other courses may further diminish the student's self-esteem as the student may not perceived himself to "really" be a college student.

Traditionally, the course content of introductory sociology courses introduces students to the scientific study of society. To illustrate concepts and theories, most courses focus on the American experience. Introductory courses encourage encounters with new ideas and information but the very use of our own society as a frame of reference may be self-defeating. The course content of this project utilizes a comparative model, comparing cultural components of different societies on a number of topics such as religion, deviance, race and ethnic relations, sex roles, family structure, political economies, socialization and education.

Most introduction to sociology courses, after an introduction to the history of the discipline and its methodologies, begin by examining the socialization of the

individual and move toward understanding social institutions. This course, however, begins by looking at the geography of the world including population and ecology, their impact on the social institutions in various areas of the world and concluding with an analysis of socialization. Students begin with a more global perspective rather than the typical ethnocentric view.

Coursework in the Basic Composition class uses students' writing to help them understand the world and their place in it. Our task is to help the students make the necessary connections in their writing to enable them to better understand the complexities of our world. Guest lecturers with an expertise in international studies are used as specialists in the sociology component of the course. In the Basic Composition component of the course, they are interviewed by the students who write up their interviews as one of their assignments. In the evening, the guest lecturers give talks to the public. In this way, we maximize the use of the guest lecturer as an enhancer of international education. Tentative topics for the public lectures focus on international issues such as race and ethnic relation, the changing family, the world economy, and comparative sex roles. Our guest lecturers come from the New York metropolitan area outside of the service range of the College. Student projects in both the Basic Composition and the Introduction to Sociology emphasize the connections

between reading, writing, thinking, and experience. Among the student projects are those that allow participant observations.

The number of students initially affected by the program in the Spring 1987 semester was twenty-three, a number the College found suitable for effectively teaching Basic Composition. Once pilot tested, the project continues to include all students in Basic Composition. In the Fall 1987 semester, approximately 400 students were impacted by the activities.

The international modules developed for use in this project will be applicable for use in other Introduction to Sociology sections that are not in tandem with Basic Composition. The College runs approximately 15 sections a semester with an average class size of 33 students.

International Lecture Series

Raritan Valley Community College is blessed with several faculty members who possess expertise in international/intercultural education and who are able and willing to share their knowledge and skill with the college community. Speakers from outside the College are also occasionally invited to do the same. Starting with the Spring of 1987 international lectures on various topics are scheduled with the frequency of a little more than every

other week. Presentations take many forms: lecture, slide presentation, debate, dialogue, seminar, etc. About half of the presentations occur in the evening, the other half during college hour (a period of one and a half hours at noon set aside for non-class activities).

Lectures are free and open to both the students and the college community. Instructors in the arts, humanities and social sciences are especially encouraged to urge their students to attend the lectures. Some instructors request for abstracts of each presentation beforehand so that they can determine whether to require their student to attend those that are relevant to their courses. Some instructors give extra credits to students who report back on what they have learned from the presentation.

The topics for the first lecture series follow:

The Moslem World: Conflicts Within and Without
Avoiding Culture Blunders in Your Travels
Individuality in China
French Impressionism
The American and Indian Middle Class: A Class of Expectations
Cameroon: A Microcosm of Africa
The Legacy of the Caste System in India
The Powerlessness of the Japanese Women

The second series consists of the following presentations:

Continuity and Change in Chinese Culture
The Muslim World
India: The Past and the Present
Raku Pottery: East and West
The Aztec Ball Game: You Play for Your Life
Debate: Resolve: That trade protectionism is good for America

Debate: Resolve: That the United States should support the Contras
Nuclear Proliferation

The College's Community Education and Services Division and Public Relations Office are very supportive of this project. They send flyers to hundreds of residents in our service area and put out press releases on each presentation. In the initial series we even served refreshments.

The size of the audience ranges from a low of thirty to a high of two hundred. As the project gains popularity we hope to attract a larger audience. Distributing abstracts of presentations to the faculty makes it possible for them to determine in advance the relevance of the topic to their classes.

International Mutual Faculty Exchange

Faculty exchange has been one of the ways of fostering international and intercultural awareness among faculty and students. By bringing in a foreign expert in his field and encouraging our most able faculty to participate in exchange we seek to impart a measure of international awareness to our students in two ways. As a condition of the exchange, the exchange faculty will be given released time from teaching so that he may give presentations about aspects of his culture to the college community. Our own faculty, who comes home after one or two years, will likewise be afforded released time so that he can disseminate information he gains from his

stay abroad.

Although our first faculty exchange plan has been put on hold temporarily due to unsettled conditions in the country of the other party we have gone through some preliminary arrangements. Financial, administrative and accomodation proposals have been prepared for consideration. Plans are expected to go through as soon as conditions improve.

In order to facilitate the exchange process, the faculty exchange will be in the same discipline so that the faculty concerned is expected to step into the position vacated by the other. A hospitality officer in each of the participating colleges will be assigned to coordinate the activities of exchange faculty in the host institution to maximize international/cultural aspect of the exchange and to help the visiting faculty feel at home.

Interdisciplinary Study Abroad in the Summer and Semestral Breaks

Occasionally the course Special Topics in Humanities acquires a specific character in the form and substance of an interdisciplinary international/intercultural study. In the ten-day break of the Spring 1988 semester, for example, an interdisciplinary study of the Yucatan Peninsula is scheduled. The course is a three-credit social science elective. An historian, a foreign language specialist and an anthropologist will guide the students' experience.

The course includes a first-hand study of civilizations that built Uxmal, Chichen Itza, Tulum, and Koba on the Yucatan Peninsula. The student is expected to--(1) study and discuss articles on the history of Mexico from earliest times to the present, (2) learn conversational Spanish prior to the trip, (3) keep a journal of the educational experience, and (4) spend actual classtime on campus before and after the trip for briefing and final evaluation, respectively.

The number of students who tried to register for this course exceeded the maximum number that could be accommodated, an indication of its popularity. A regular re-offering is comtemplated.

Similar three-credit studies abroad have been conducted in history of art, French studies, and Spanish studies in the summer or during inter- and intra-semestral breaks.

Non-Credit Mini-Courses in International Business and Foreign Language

The College's Division of Community Education and Services regularly offers non-credit courses in international business and foreign languages. Typically each course is a two-hour weekly session for four weeks with a nominal inclusive fee of $45.00 per course.

Most of the courses are taught by adjunct faculty who work as full-time professionals in their respective fields

outside the college.

Some of the courses are:

Conversational and Business Spanish I
Conversational and Business German I
Conversational and Business French I
Conversational Japanese for Beginners
Conversational Japanese Intermediate
Conversational and Business Italian
International Letters of Credit
Export Documentation
International Marketing Management
Living Overseas Workshop

Holocaust Studies with Global Perspective

The College's Holocaust Studies Center sponsors activities with global perspective. In the Spring 1987 the activities centered around the theme "Holocaust and Genocide: Learning Through Experience." They included the experiences of non-Jewish peoples such as the Armenians. The single-day program included seven workshops and four films over a four-period schedule. Each workshop, which lasted forty minutes, was designed to facilitate discussion.

The following description of the workshops and films gives one an idea of the breadth of the activities:

WORKSHOPS

1. Wallenberg - Professor Harvey Rosenfeld, a history professor at Pace University, author of a book on Wallenberg and editor of the Martyrdom and Resistance Journal, presents a brief history on Wallenberg including his actions to save thousands of Jews in Hungary during the last stages of the war. Wallenberg is one of the many people who

risked his life to save people from the concentration camps and certain death.

2. Armenian Genocide - Genocide has not been restricted to Jews alone. There are far too many examples in our history to draw upon. In this session Gary Kulhanjian, a member of Governor Kean's Holocaust and Genocide Advisory Panel, talks about the experiences of the Armenians in the early part of the 20th century.

3. Meaning of Holocaust to Christians - Sister Rose Thering is a Professor of Religious Studies at Seton Hall University and a distinguished international lecturer and activist. She discusses the meaning of the holocaust for Christians and Christianity. Recently she was at the forefront protesting the election of Kurt Waldheim, President of Austria, and a former Nazi soldier, with strong links to Nazi atrocities.

4. Prejudice - This program surveys current global conditions and their relationship to the denial of human rights and possibly genocide. What are the similarities between conditions today and those in the past that might lead us to the same horrible results? What can we expect from South Africa and apartheid or Russia and its treatment of Soviet Jewry? Professor Glenn Ricketts and Mr. Alonzo Cartlidge present this program.

5. Survivors - This session features local Jewish and non-Jewish victims of the concentration camps. They speak about their experiences within the camps and the reasons for their internment.

6. Liberators - Former American soldiers who were among the first to liberate the camps speak about their experiences as they found the concentration camp victims and the Nazi perpetrators.

FILMS

34 Years After Hitler
This film shows the current and recurring outbreaks of Nazi activities within the United States. The film shows their meetings, indoctrination centers, and public rallies.

Forgotten Genocide
This film depicts the early 20th century Armenian

tragedy through interviews with American and European survivors.

Act of Faith
This film tells the story of the courageous and moral actions of Danish citizens who defied the Nazi regime and thus saved thousands of people from the concentration camps.

Night and Fog
This is a French film with English subtitles that graphically depicts the horrors of the concentration camps. The film contrasts historic footage taken when the camps were liberated with the empty camps as they stand today. This film may be too intense for some viewers.

The overall attendance in the Spring 1987 was approximately 1500, including two off-campus presentations within the College's service area.

To achieve unrestricted freedom in its programming the Center is funded from private sources. It is interesting to note that the Spring 1988 program, which has just come out, is even more global than the previous one.

Introduction to Humanities Integrates History of Western Civilization with English

As a means of giving an international historical slant and a solid content to English I, a six-credit Introduction to Humanities I course has been so constructed that topical modules in history of western civilization serve as the content on which the students develop their skills in grammar, mechanics and style of writing. We often forget that Western Europe, the origin of western civilization, is international to us.

The class meets six hours a week in three two-hour sessions and is taught by a faculty who possesses a double major--English and history. Although it is one course in terms of scheduling and teaching, the six credits that a student earns upon successfully completing it are recorded as three credits for English I and three credits for History of Western Civilization I and are treated as though the student did the courses separately.

Introduction to Humanities II is set up similarly and successful completion earns three credits for English II and three credits for History of Western Civilization II.

The topics for part I include Gender and Family, City and Civilization, Religion and Society and War and Peace. For part II the topics range from Politics and the State, Economics and Ecology, Race to Nationality. The topics are examined in their historical perspective in the context of western civilization. This topical treatment of history of western civilization is not new at Raritan Valley Community College. A member of the faculty has written a popular textbook based on the topical format. It has been in use at the College during the last few years.

Where do we go from here?

The Raritan Valley Community College experience in international education has evolved out of the perceived

needs of the College community and the interests and expertise of its faculty and administration. So far all projects and programs have been made possible without necessitating additional personnel or facility. As needs change and new opportunities present themselves it is inevitable that new strategies will be tried and those that cease to serve its goals will be eliminated.

If the current trend is an indication of the future, international education seems destined for expansion. Already, starting in September 1987, RVCC has hired a full-time person whose task is to coordinate its international/intercultural activities. It has also joined the New Jersey Collegiate Consortium for International/Intercultural Education. By pooling the resources of the consortium it is possible, to undertake projects of the magnitude that impact on a large population. Also, interested faculty and administration from consortium members meet regularly to exchange ideas and mutual concerns concerning international education.

Some colleges in the region with large populations of international students and with a host of multi-national corporations in their service areas have individually established their own international education centers. Some centers stress international business education while others focus on studies abroad in addition to helping in curriculum development in their campuses. Bergen Community College has

its International Round Table which serves as a forum on international trade issues for business and industry. Its membership includes over 100 commercial, financial, service and industrial firms located in Bergen County and its surrounding metropolitan areas. The IRT holds monthly luncheon seminars on such topics as "Exp rt Marketing," "Doing Business with Canada" and "Japanese Perspective on Insurance Practices." Middlesex County College's Center for International Education has made arrangements with its sister institution abroad, Middlesex Polytechnic in Trent Park, England. County students enroll at the sister institution through MCC for a full 15-credit program for one semester in a wide range of courses. All credits earned count to the student's degree requirement at MCC.

The possibilities for infusing international experience into the curriculum at RVCC and at similar institutions are limitless. They have barely been explored.

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